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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION N
10/019,650	01/03/2002	Haruko Toyoshima	0445-0316P	9924
2292	7590	10/05/2004		EXAMINER
BIRCH STEWART KOLASCH & BIRCH PO BOX 747 FALLS CHURCH, VA 22040-0747				KIDWELL, MICHELE M
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3761	

DATE MAILED: 10/05/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/019,650	TOYOSHIMA ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Michele Kidwell	3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 September 2004.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-6 is/are pending in the application:
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-6 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection.

Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114.

Applicant's submission filed on September 14, 2004 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1 – 2 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yoshioka (US 6,156,023)

With respect to claim 1, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article which is provided with a liquid permeable surface sheet (2), a liquid impermeable leakage-prevention sheet (3) and a liquid-retaining absorbent formed

substantially oblong (4), and is providing on longitudinal opposite sides thereof with a pair of right and left elastic member-carrying three-dimensional guards (figure 2), wherein the three-dimensional guards each as a skin contacting surface portion (figure 3) formed by folding back a side on a free side towards the outer side of the absorbent article, and said elastic members are respectively disposed and fixed to (i) said skin-contacting surface portion and to (ii) an approximately width widthwise central portion of a raised portion, wherein the raised portion is located between the skin contacting surface portion and a base end of the three dimensional guard as set forth in figure 3.

As to claim 2, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article wherein a total width of the elastic member disposed on the skin contacting surface portion (24B, 24C, 24A) is larger than a total width of the elastic member disposed on the raised portion (30) as set forth in figure 3.

With reference to claim 6, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article wherein the skin contacting surface is folded back along the elastic member at a part of the location of the elastic member nearest the raised portion as set forth in figure 3.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 3 – 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshioka (US 6,156,023).

The difference between Yoshioka and claim 3 is the provision that a ratio between W1 and W2 is 0.1 – 1.0.

The examiner contends that this limitation is inherently met by the Yoshioka reference. Any portion of the skin contacting surface portion (large or small) may be considered W1 and any width of the raised portion may be considered W2. Therefore, the routine experimentation of these portions/widths may be measured to ultimately yield the claimed limitation.

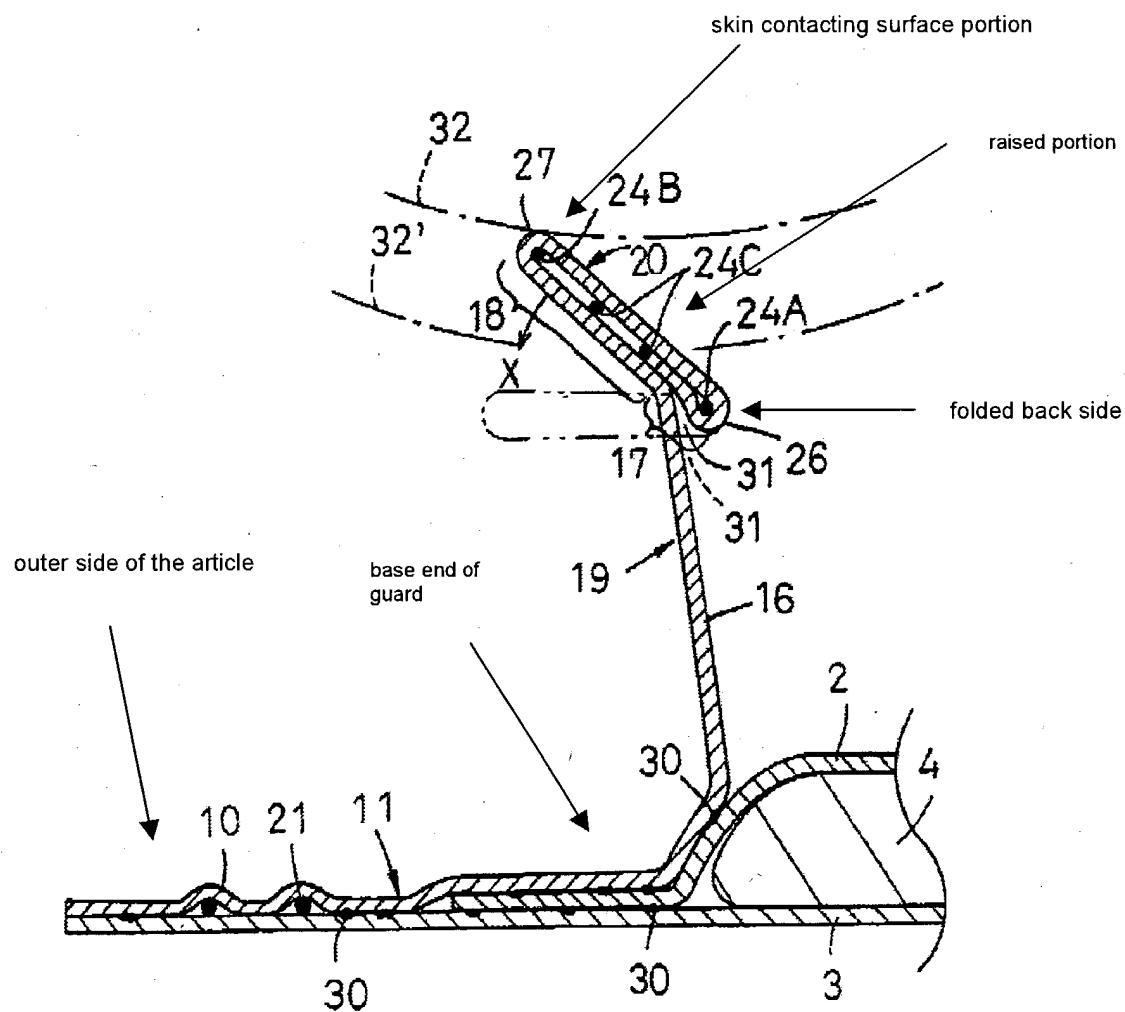
With reference to claim 4, the examiner contends that Yoshioka inherently meets the claimed limitations because the applicant states that the portion having the larger elastic members will allow for the larger stress (page 7, lines 14 – 17 of the applicant's specification). Therefore, since Yoshioka provides larger or more elastic members on the skin contacting portion (24B, 24C, 24A), then the skin contacting portion will have a stress larger than the raised portion as claimed.

With respect to claim 5, see the rejection of claim 4. Any portion of the area designated 11 may be considered a leg portion having no leg gather. If the raised portion is bisected, the lower half (which is considered the area above reference numeral 16 in figure 3) will have a larger stress than the upper half portion (the area beneath reference numeral 16 in figure 3) for the same reasons listed above.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed August 16, 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to the applicant's argument that Yoshioka does not provide for an absorbent member having a skin-contacting surface portion formed by folding back a side on a free side towards the outer side of the absorbent article, the examiner disagrees and refers to figure 3 shown below.



Additionally, the examiner refers to annotated figure 3 to show the interpretation of the elements of Yoshioka by the examiner. The area just below the skin contacting surface to just below the area showing the folded back side is considered the "raised portion". As shown, the elastic members (24A, 24B, 24C) are disposed and fixed to the skin contacting surface portion and to an approximately widthwise central portion of a raised portion wherein the raised portion is located between the skin contacting surface portion and a base end of the guard.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michele Kidwell whose telephone number is 703-305-2941. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 7:30am - 4:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Larry Schwartz can be reached on 703-308-1412. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Michele Kidwell
Examiner
Art Unit 3761